DES Daughters At Increased Risk For Endometriosis

"In utero exposures and the incidence of endometriosis" by Stacy A. Missmer et al, Fertility and Sterility, Vol. 82, No. 6, December 2004.

Reviewed by Sally Keely, M.S.

This prospective cohort study shows a link between in utero diethylstilbestrol (DES) exposure and the incidence of endometriosis. Endometriosis is a painful chronic disease occurring when endometrial tissue is found outside the uterus. This misplaced tissue develops into growths or lesions that respond to the menstrual cycle in the same way that the tissue of the uterine lining does — each month it builds up, breaks down, and sheds. The blood and tissue shed from endometrial growths has no way of leaving the body resulting in internal bleeding and inflammation that can cause pain and infertility.

DES exposed persons have altered estrogen receptors and an increased risk of autoimmune disorders. These factors are associated with endometriosis. It has been suspected therefore that DES Daughters are at increased risk of endometriosis. This study confirms it.

"... the relation between DES exposure and endometriosis may result from a combined effect of increased retrograde menstruation, immune dysfunction, and exogenous estrogen exposure."

Participants in the Nurses’ Health Study II (NHSII) which began in 1989 and spanned ten years of follow-up included over 84,000 female nurses aged 25-42 who had (at baseline in 1989) never been diagnosed with endometriosis, infertility, or cancer. Data were collected regarding their in utero environment (including DES exposure) and birth/infantData.

We know that DES Daughters are more likely to present with anatomical complications such as cervical stenosis (narrowing of the cervical canal, sometimes to the point of closure) that may increase the likelihood of retrograde menstruation. In utero newborn data.

During the study 1226 cases of incidence of laparoscopically confirmed endometriosis were compared according to birth weight, prematurity, multiple gestation, DES exposure and, continued on page 3

Endometriosis

(1) The incidence of endometriosis among Daughters and it was even greater in the number of confirmed DES exposed patients with concurrent DES exposure and endometriosis was small (2 cases), this study showed a significant link between in utero DES exposure and endometriosis. The results are statistically sound, and for DES Action-Daughters Users!